# THE SOVIET UNVEILING CAMPAIGN IN 1920S UZBEKISTAN: CLASS, GENDER, AND POLITICS

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## ABSTRACT

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During the late 1920s, the Soviet state launched a wide-ranging campaign in Central Asia, called the *nastuplenie* or *hujum* ('assault'), against various practices in daily life (*byt*) considered backwards or oppressive. In Uzbekistan, the centerpiece of this campaign was the fight against women veiling their faces. This campaign generated some enthusiasm and recruits, but collapsed under a violent backlash and was abandoned just as the Soviet state began its campaign for collectivization across the country. However, anti-veiling measures continued in various forms throughout the history of the USSR and the process of the *hujum* had an important impact on the development of a Soviet Central Asia.

This paper discusses the enactment of the *hujum* and why it was finally abandoned. Second, I discuss the conflicting frameworks used to interpret the *hujum* and the various comparative work that has been done with regard to other unveiling campaigns. Lastly, I highlight the inadequacies of current frameworks used to interpret the Soviet Union and make some suggestions for new areas of research.

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# INTRODUCTION

Islam and Communism: two of the most fraught terms in American discourse. In popular as well as academic discourse, both terms signify a whole thicket of complicated, contradictory meanings. Both tend to be interpreted as exotic, foreign phenomenon. Communism was the great enemy of the Cold War era; it has been (partially and imperfectly) replaced by Islam during the period of the war on terror. As a result, both words carry heavy ideological baggage, often serving as blanket terms that serve to obscure rather than illuminate historical events. Both are often considered inherently totalitarian and oppressive, as 'ways of life' that are fundamentally unfree. However, Islam and Communism are often also considered mutually exclusive: one allegedly anti-modern and traditional, the other strongly associated with forced modernization. These contradictory but strong associations make it difficult to approach the issue of encounters between Islam and Communism in an objective way. However, by carefully studying the encounters between Islam and Communism, one can undermine essentialist and clichéd approaches, leading to a fuller understanding of both terms.

One such encounter is the *hujum*—the Soviet 'assault' in Central Asia from 1926-1928 against the old *byt*, 'way of life,' including cultural practices strongly associated with 'Islam' or 'tradition' in the region such as bride price, child marriage, and the seclusion of women. At first glance this may seem like a classic struggle between a totalitarian, modern system trying to destroy a hidebound traditionalism that stands in its way. Early scholarship did, in fact, interpret the *hujum* in this way. Later scholarship emphasized the existence of significant movements for modernization, and interpreted the conflict as one primarily *within* Uzbek society, rather than *between* Communist Russians and Muslim Uzbeks. Furthermore, scholars who interpreted the

*hujum* primarily as a question of colonization started to draw on the rich literature about unveiling campaigns in Western empires.

This paper focuses specifically on the aspects of the *hujum* that revolved around unveiling in Uzbekistan in the period 1926-1929. The *hujum* focused on other practices other than veiling, occurred in other regions of Central Asia, and was not always confined to these exact dates. However, I have chosen this focus because the unveiling campaign in many ways came to define the *hujum* and engendered a uniquely violent backlash. As well as helping to make connections to other debates about veiling, women, and Islam, examining the *hujum* also sheds new light on important debates about the Soviet Union itself. Studying the *hujum* raises fundamental questions about gender, nationality, and class in the Soviet Union, as well as the nature of the relationship between Central Asia and Moscow. The process of the *hujum* was by no means peripheral, but was closely tied to the major processes of industrialization, collectivization, and cultural revolution.

In addition, the literature on the *hujum* is the most well-developed with respect to Uzbekistan. Particularly because this is an undergraduate thesis and I do not have the ability to conduct field research or discover primary sources, I was guided toward reinterpreting debates on research that already exists, rather than regions or events about which I have no practical ability to produce meaningful new research. While reading this literature, I became frustrated because it seemed that many authors were arguing about ideal types (in particular, ‘colonization’ and ‘modernization’) without defining the parameters of these types. In addition, many of the debates seemed to involve scholars talking past each other.

Specifically, the debate over interpretation of the *hujum*, and of Central Asia's place in the Soviet Union generally, has led to disputes over whether Soviet Central Asia should be seen as a colonizing project, or a project of internal modernization. In order to address this debate, I first give a historical overview of the *hujum* itself and what occurred, as well as its effects on later Soviet and post-Soviet history. Second, I discuss comparative works concerning the *hujum* and unveiling campaigns under both Western colonial and modernizing Muslim governments, outlining the different aspects of the debate. Third, I move on to a more abstract discussion of whether or not the Soviet Union should be considered a colonial power in Central Asia. Lastly, I argue that the colonizing/modernizing paradigms create unnecessary dichotomies and put forward new frameworks for future research.

# CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF THE *HUJUM*

## OVERVIEW

The Bolsheviks did not immediately jump into any project to fundamentally upend Central Asian society. On the contrary, their early tenure in Central Asia was marked by many complicated advances and retreats, most of them surrounding the exact balance between Islamic and Soviet law that would prevail in Central Asia (see Massell 1974, chapters 7-9). The Soviet plan for Central Asian was not a fully worked-out program: it "crystallized only gradually, … was by no means consistent and continuous, and … constituted a loosely linked set of beliefs" (Massell 1974: 132). However, over the course of the 1920s the central authorities began to shift to a strategy of "administrative assault," of a state-sponsored direct attack on *byt* (ways of life) deemed oppressive, patriarchal, and non-Soviet. In opposition to the legal battles (which tended to focus on divorce), "the activist extra-legal dispositions reveal[ed] a determined, ever-narrowing emphasis on a single issue: female seclusion and veiling" (Massell 1974: 216). The exact motives will be discussed and debated in more detail later in the paper; however, for now I simply note the shift itself. The Soviets called this against patriarchy in Central Asia, including the unveiling campaign, the *nastuplenie* (Russian for "assault"), which was translated into Uzbek as *hujum* (Kamp 2006: 164).

The *hujum* led to initially successful demonstrations with mass burnings of *paranjis* in public spaces, and did manage to generate some level of popular support (Massell 1974: 256, 262-4). These mass unveilings came to define the *hujum*. The public gatherings on International Women's Day (March 8) in 1927 involved coordinated mass unveilings across Uzbek cities. Uzbek leaders and women spoke at this gathering the necessity for women's liberation through deveiling and its importance in creating a new, modern Uzbek nation. These gatherings thus

connected the *hujum* to the construction of a new Soviet Uzbekistan, and similar rituals occurred well after the *hujum* itself ended (Kamp 2002: 264, 274).

Furthermore, many Uzbek women did take advantage of the *hujum* to advance their own standings. The new Soviet policies were most attractive to the women who were most marginal in Uzbek society: "maltreated wives, wives of polygamous men, recent child brides, menial employees in well-to-do households, orphans, widows, and divorcées" (Massell 1974: 260). Many such Uzbek women chose to run for office, participate in the theater, or join the party, while others attempted to use the new divorce and property laws to assert personal and economic independence (Massell 1974: 26-2). After the *hujum*, there are reports of poorer Muslim women (led by Communists) "tearing veils off richer women", attacking local elites, and denouncing those who committed crimes of *byt* as well as former guerilla fighters (Massell 1974: 263). Indeed, contrary to the idea that the Soviets sought to liberate Central Asian women from all sexual and social mores, party organizers in fact worried that some women were falling into sexual promiscuity (Massell 1974: 265). The new divorce laws also had a double-sided effect, as families often used the liberalization of divorce to marry off their daughters to several different men in succession, contributing to the very 'sale' of women the Soviets wanted to end (Massell 1974: 274; see also Northrop (2004)).

Despite this enthusiasm, evasion of the *hujum* and the new laws against crimes of *byt* was rampant. *Mullahs* and other local elites launched public campaigns connected the new female 'emancipation' to the end of sexual modesty, sexual exploitation of women by Communists, the end of Islam, and even the apocalypse itself (Massell 1974: 277). At least according to contemporary reports, mosque attendence, along with public support for an end to Soviet laws suppressing religious practices (Massell 1974: 280).

Government statistics show women unveiling at very low rates, with frequent reveiling—and even these numbers were often exaggerated (Northrop 2004: 183-185). For instance, in the *mahalla* (neighbor) of Türk-Yangi-Shahar in the city of Tashkent, 28 women unveiled in 1927, 49 in 1928, and 81 in 1929, but only 10 women permanently unveiled (Northrop 2004: 185). From 1927-1929, about two thousand women were murdered in relation to the unveiling campaign (Kamp 2006: 186). Those unveiled women who were not killed still faced constant harassment in public (Kamp 2006: 144) and were accused of being promiscuous or spreading veneral diseases (Kamp 2006: 194-195). Men who supported the *hujum* were also often ostracized (Massell 1974: 279). Furthermore, major riots like the Chust affair (Northrop 2004: 139-163, *passim*) highlighted the extent of popular discontent with the *hujum*.

While a minority of Uzbek women did participate in the *hujum*, the vast majority either did not participate or opposed it. As Northrop (2004) notes, "[t]he largest single group [of Uzbek women] numbered in the millions: women who appear in the documents only through their absence" (192). A few even participated in violent actions against the veil (Northrop 2004: 193-195). Some of this female participation was in fact a strategic response by traditional elites in Central Asia, who, in attempting to 'win back' women, tried themselves to use the wives of the elite "as initial cadres in establishing regularized contacts with female masses," to emphasize the important role women played in spiritual affairs, and to harmonize Islam with women's education (Massell 1974: 270-1).

Kamp (2006) summarizes the fundamental story of the *hujum* thus: "the Communist Party called on Uzbek women to remove the paranji and chachvon. . . . Tragically, many women were murdered for unveiling. Fearing violence, thousands of women resumed wearing their paranjis and chachvons, abandoning them years later" (11). Women who unveiled were at the

forefront of demanding compulsory unveiling and harsh measures against opponents of the *hujum*. A group of Uzbek schoolteachers complained to their city soviet in 1928 that, after pushing for the *hujum*, "'you did not drive it to a conclusion and then [you] started to say that unveiling is a matter of the free will of the women themselves. Based on this declaration, nearly all the women who still wear the paranji are denouncing us for having sold out our faith, calling us shamesless and dogs of the street'" (Northrop 2004: 195). Zhenotdel workers "repeatedly called for strengthening penalties for murder and for providing stronger protection for unveiled women" (Kamp 2006: 206). This discontent resulted from the fact that "in the heat of the social upheaval in 1927 and 1928, [local officials] refused to provide what actual and potential female defectors from tradition needed most: moral, organizational, educational, and economic support" (Massell 1974: 298) By 1929, there was a push among activists in to ban the veil altogether. For instance Liubimova, head of the All-Union Women's Division's Eastern Group, argued that banning the veil would make things easier on women who chose to unveil, because they could no longer be singled out and harassed (Kamp 2006: 207-8). Thus, Liubimova argued that the only way to preserve the choice to freely unveil for women who wanted to was to *remove* the choice from all women.

However, this demand was rejected in May 1929 and the Party "accused those agitating for a decree of losing perspective on women's liberation and ignoring class consciousness" (Kamp 2006: 209). Although the state increased penalties for those who committed crimes against women associated with the *hujum*, it was often reluctant to enforce these, as this would require enforcing harsh penalties against the very poor and middle peasants it hoped to attract (Massell 1974: 310). The Party rejected the main features of the *hujum* and called for more patient, restrained, small-bore efforts toward women's liberation in Central Asia (Massell 1974:

353). Unwilling to manage the violent passions unleashed by the *hujum*, "the Soviet regime had clearly opted for a strategic retreat" (Massell 1974: 356). This shift was seen as a betrayal by the activists on the ground who had suffered the consequences of the violent backlash against the *hujum* (Northrop 2004: 299). The Soviet state had attempted to dramatically uproot gender relations in Uzbekistan, but was unwilling to put in the resources to do so. Instead, the Party achieved the worst of both worlds: it provoked a violent backlash without significant progress in women's status to make up for it.

## PERIODIZATION OF THE HUJUM

Northrop (2004) notes Massell's periodization "sits oddly against standard periodizations of Soviet history—1929 is usually seen as a beginning, not the end, of forced social change in the USSR" (315). Massell himself admits this, seeing the *hujum* itself as an example of the "bacchanalian planning" characteristic of the First Five-Year plan. He sees the retreat from the *hujum* as an anachronistic "call for caution and restraint in Central Asia" and expresses surprise that the new Stalinist order was responsive to such a call (Massell 1974: 360). Indeed, Massell goes so far as to somewhat dubiously claim Krupskaya's critique of the *hujum* as a hidden critique of Stalinism in favor of a pluralistic, gradual approach associated with Lenin and Bukharin (Massell 1974: 362-6).

In fact, study of Central Asia can also reveal problems in the traditional periodization of the Soviet Union, as the 'great break' of the First Five Year Plan hit different regions in uneven and contradictory ways (Kassymbekova 2017: 2). However, one should not conclude that the attempt at social transformation through 'administrative assault' simply stopped in 1929 with the beginning of collectivization in Uzbekistan. Northrop emphasizes that in many ways the *hujum*

continued into the '30s: bonfires of *paranjis* and *chachvons* still went on; the press still reported regularly on unveiling; penalties for attacks on women who unveiled were strengthened; and unveiling often accompanied collectivization. Kamp also concurs that unveiling often went hand-in-hand with collectivization. However, they disagree on whether or not unveiling actually increased or decreased during the 1930s: Northrop argues the state unintentionally revitalized veiling "by equating it with Uzbek religio-cultural and now national traditions" (Northrop 2004: 347), while Kamp claims his reliance on police records leads him to overstate the extent of unveiling or reveiling.

Much more extensive research on Uzbekistan in the 1930's is needed to answer this question satisfactorily. Regardless, when one considers the prominent debates over *byt* within the party during the 1920s, the *hujum* no longer looks quite so anachronistic, nor quite so unique to Central Asia. Wood (1997) describes how the turn toward *byt* occurred at the center in 1923, influenced by "the unrest sweeping the country in these months and years" (195). In response to widespread discontent within the working class and party itself, many began to urgently agitate for rapid cultural change in order to combat the risk of capitalist restoration under NEP. She quotes a typical contemporary article worrying that "the elemental forces of the new conditions could 'overwhelm us, penetrating our inner lives, our way of being [*nash uklad*], our psyches; and the NEP way of life, i.e., one that is petty bourgeois and bureaucratic, will facilitate the inner degeneration of the working class and the party" (Wood 1997: 197). This led to radical calls for cultural revolution, which preceded the traditional 'great break' of 1929 itself.

This overwhelming fear of non-socialist *byt* overwhelming the new socialist life is echoed through the testimonies of the young, female cadre of the Zhenotdel on encountering Central Asian society, who were horrified by what they perceived as essentially a patriarchal

backwater. Thus, here the fear was not of the capitalist NEP but of pre-capitalist patriarchal forms. Massell (1974) describes how the "sense of shock and missionary zeal on the part of arriving female communist organizers that initially informed the style and substance of official Soviet peceptions and commitments" (134-5). He argues they had an elemental emotional revulsion to "what seemed like monstrous, openly humiliating customs emphasizing this inferiority at every turn" (134-5), and expressed this concern in terms of morality (139) and the individual (141). This led to an approach to resisting oppression based on spectacular symbolic acts that would result in an "almost automatic breaking down of taboos" (150-2). The Communist Uzbek organizer Anna Nukhrat advised the Party:

> to throw down the gauntlet to all and everything: to terrible Allah himself; to his servants—the sharp-clawed, grasping, greedy mullahs and ishans; to the family's elders; to all kinsmen; to the entire surrounding *primordial style of life*. . . . The Eastern woman who enters the party breaks with the *past* forever; once she has thus crossed the threshold of a new life, there can be, for her, no way back (Massell 1974: 145, emphasis mine)

This quote underlines two of the main ideas behind the *hujum*. The first was that Central Asia had a fundamentally antediluvian way of life, making spectacular attacks on women's oppression (apart from class) revolutionary in a way it would not be in a capitalist society. The second is that 'Eastern' woman could simply jump from the old world to the new, an approach which, as we have seen before, ignored the very real struggles that needed to be undertaken in the society at large. The Eastern woman might have crossed the threshold symbolically, but she still had to decide whether to literally cross the threshold every day without a veil and face the harassment, abuse, and violence that would come crashing down on her.

Similar to Massell's emphasis on Zhenotdel organizers, Tokhtakhodjaeva (1992) identifies the real basis of the hujum as "Party functionaries who had only recently arrived in

Central Asia, and who were often unfamiliar with Asian conditions but who saw in their posting to Turkestan a way to rise up the ladder" (60). While her assessment is more cynical than Massell's, it is important to emphasis that the drive for the *hujum* itself originated within the Zhenotdel, among largely European (as well as a few Central Asiain) women. While the *hujum* did involve and energize many Central Asian women, and while many of them came to support the campaign itself and even sterner measures, the original impetus for the assault came from above, came below.

I argue this moralistic, individualistic response reflected this paranoia engendered by NEP, heightened in this case by the cultural shock and preexisting Orientalist framework through which many Zhenotdel workers filtered their work. As I discuss below, I do believe that the fact that most Zhenotdel workers were European women who used Orientalist language and understandings mean that Central Asian women were in fact perfectly content with their lot and had no internal critique of their society. I also reject Orientalism as an all-powerful force preventing any kind of contact with objective reality. However, Zhenotdel assessments of women's role in Central Asia (see Massell 1974, chapter 3) do fundamentally resemble classic Orientalist discourse. Like much Communist writing on the region, "drew upon prerevolutionary traditions of describing the East through … overarching, formulaic images. Many Bolshevik views sounded as much Orientalist as Marxist" (Northrop 2004: 39). I will discuss the thorny problem of the concept of 'Orientalism' and its application to the Soviet situation later in the paper. However, it is apparent from their words and analysis that Zhenotdel workers viewed the oppression of Muslim women in Central Asia as being of a 'special type,' distinct from the oppression of women elsewhere in the Soviet Union.

However, the idea that women were crucial to the success of the revolution was not exclusive to Central Asia. Women in general "were portrayed as a kind of tabula rasa, a group 'unseduced' (*neiskushennye*) by modern politics. They were to be 'awakened, 'stirred up' (*vskolykhnut'*), 'aroused.'….If women were convinced of the need for the defense and building of socialism, then the next generation would follow, and the fall of the old 'patriarchalism,' so hated by Lenin, would be assured" (Wood 1997: 39). Here, as in Central Asia, the concern with the woman question was fundamentally shaped by "competition with other groups in society for the allegiances …. of a new group in society" (Wood 1997: 38). Bolsheviks spoke of the need "to penetrate into every corner of the remote village …. in order to wake up and raise up the peasant woman who has not yet awakened, to force her to feel that she is also a human being, a woman citizen, a comrade'" (Wood 1997: 39). The party experienced severe difficulties in reaching out to all peasant women, including Russians (Wood 1997: 80, 83-4). However, women workers made up 40% of workers in large-scale industry (Wood 1997: 39), and the approach that understood women as proletariats who needed to be incorporated into the larger working class struggle was fundamentally different from that which saw them as women exploited by a patriarchal feudal economy who needed to be liberated first and foremost as *women*.

## LATER SOCIALIST APPROACHES TO UNVEILING

Despite these complexities, Soviet assessments of the *hujum* in later decades tended to treat it as a straightforward model for women's liberation. A 1977 work by Rakhima Aminova, for instance, presented women's liberation in Uzbekistan as an accomplished fact, due to the achievements of the *hujum* and the construction of socialism in Uzbekistan. She characterizes the liberation as having four phases: the first phase (1917-1926), which concentrated on public

education; the second phase, the *hujum* (1926-1927); the third stage, the building of socialism (1928-1932); and the fourth stage, the "triumph of socialism in Uzbekistan" (Aminova 1977: 218-219). Aminova's text is a perfect example of the texts described in Kamp (2004), where "Soviet scholars and activists who have written about the Hujum and about women in Uzbekistan often portray a rosy situation where women were liberated and, except for a few 'relics of the past,' were fulfilling the promises of modernity and living in equality with men" (Kamp 2004: 227). For example, Aminova argues that that the First Five Year Plan "brought thousands of women into modern mechanised and industrial and agricultural socialist production" (Aminova 1977: 218-219). She concludes "This experience is also important for countries with an exploitative system, where women's inequality is still very much in evidence—and primarily for countries of the Middle East" (221).

Post hoc assessments of the *hujum* therefore did not just inform the Soviet Union's assessment of its own history, but also of its future strategies in politically sensitive areas contested between the United States and the Soviet Union. This became clear in the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, in which the historical *hujum* became the central historical framework through which Soviet activists viewed attempts to pursue women's liberation in Afghanistan during the course of the war.

Nunan (2016) describes how the memory of the *hujum* among the Soviets was crucial to shaping their campaigns for women's liberation during the war in Afghanistan. The *hujum* framework "had become so entrenched in authoritative discourse that activist struggled to view events in Afghanistan in any other light" (194). 1920s Central Asia, being premodern and pre-capitalist, could stand in for 1980s Afghanistan, and the same analysis that had guided the *hujum* could guide the Soviet Union's actions. Soviet activists in Afghanistan spoke of the need for

women not to just throw off the veil, but to enter economic production and become workers, suggesting a blend of the 'cultural revolution' rhetoric of the *hujum* with the later focus on material factors above all else. Nunan ultimately concludes that, in both Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, the unveiling campaigns generated widespread resistance across all sectors of society, and that the Soviets failed by privileging class over gender as their central unit of analysis (Nunan 2016: 194-6).

Other Communist countries also drew on the *hujum* for their own processes. "The Bulgarians ultimately were the most attentive students of Soviet, Turkish and other experiments of 'liberating' the women of Islam from the veil of tradition" (Neuberger 2014: 255), but this campaign became especially charged as Bulgarian authorities determined that the veil was fundamentally 'Turkish' and 'foreign,' a sign of the 'Orient within' that had to be expelled (Neuberger 2014: 255-259, *passim*). This attempt to create a homogeneous national identity as part of modern state-building contrasts with the Soviet attempt to systematize and institutionalize national difference. (See the next section for a more extensive discussion of this contrast with regard to the Soviet Union and independent Muslim-majority nations like Iran and Turkey).

However, as in the Soviet Union and in Afghanistan, the 'need' for unveiling was fundamentally intertwined with the drive to incorporate new minority populations, and especially the women of those groups, into the process of production (Neuberger 2014: 260-1). The Bulgarian experience of unveiling also ran into similar obstacles: women who unveiled were persecuted by their husbands or communities, women did not want to unveil, party members who were supposed to set an example by unveiling their wives lagged behind (Neuberger 2014: 260). Widespread unveiling was only achieved in the late 1950s, associated with systematic collectivization campaigns. However, resentment of "Bulgarianizing, modernizing [Bulgarian

Communist Party] influence in the countryside" may have also driven cases of reveiling (Neuberger 2014: 261). This complexity strongly resembles the debates about whether veiling became more or less widespread in Uzbekistan in the 1930s, where women who moved onto the *kolkhozy* were usually forced to unveil (again, see the next section for a more extensive discussion of this question). In both Bulgaria and the Soviet Union itself, collectivization both increased the power and reach of the state to affect rural society, but also triggered backlash, thereby having highly uneven effects on the consciousness of the people it ruled. However, Neuberger does not recount any kind of violent backlash on the level of the murders that occurred in Uzbekistan.

## POST-SOVIET MEMORIES OF THE HUJUM

The Uzbek female activist Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva wrote a book, *Between the Slogans of Communism and the Laws of Islam*, in order to explore the legacy of Soviet rule on the Muslim women in Central Asia in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the USSR. She notes that "[t]hose Soviet historians who until recently judged the *Khudjum* to have been an apolitical policy which played the leading role in liberating the women of the East, today regard it as having had an extremely negative impact" (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992: 61). She quotes the historian Dilorom Alimova as arguing that "'[i]n the process of the *Khudjum* many distortions were tolerated" and the *hujum* did not "'take into account local religious values" (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992: 61). Similarly, Kamp (2006) notes that "[l]ater Soviet scholars, such as Sergei Poliakov, who published their findings during perestroika, attack these exaggerated images [in earlier Soviet literature] and strongly emphasize the failings of Soviet promises" (227).

However, Tokhtakhodjaeva (1992) by no means concludes the *hujum* failed to generate organic interest among Uzbek women. She records the testimony of Mumina-khanun Khakimova, who was a member of the Komsomol during the *hujum* period. Khakimova remembers that in that period "[w]e had great faith in the new life….We thought a new and different live was going to begin in a week, a month or a year" (57). She remembers the pre-hujum period as a time of extreme oppression for women and recalls that "[t]hroughout 1927 *parandjas* were burnt, but for unveiled women it was very difficult; they were insulted, murdered by their own brothers and husbands" (58). Similarly, most of Tokhtakhodjaeva's interviewees express ambiguous attitudes, aware of both the achievements and failures of Soviet attempts at women's liberation. She herself editorializes that

> for the majority who experienced this forced liberation [the *hujum*], the compulsory form of 'equality' that it introduced brought much bitterness, misunderstanding and resentment. It was an agonising historical process which gave premature birth to a puny form of freedom, infirm and defective" (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992: 61).

However, there is still much research that remains to be done on Uzbek's women's assessments of the *hujum*, both at the time and in retrospect. There are of course extreme difficulties in researching an era in which most participants are no longer living. In addition, the elimination of many of the Uzbek Communist Party's cadres means there are few testimonies remaining of many of the Uzbek women (and men) who participated in the *hujum*. Decoding the views of even this elite stratum is difficult, as "many of these specialists and activists in the field were swept away by the purges ….  there was hardly time for them to convey, in a way detectable now, the nature of their political convictions and personalities, before vanishing from the scene" (Massell 1974: xxi-xxii). If the local Communist elite are obscure to Massell, then the attitudes of the largely poor, illiterate Uzbek women are totally opaque to him.

Furthermore, there are major gaps in consciousness between pre-Soviet and Soviet Central Asia, as a result of the massive political, economic, and social changes. “Central Asian regimes enforced a forgetting of the pre-Soviet past clouded through Latinization, Cyrillicization, and purges. Postwar intellectuals wrote of how denizens of these ‘national republics’ had become *manqurts*—people who had lost any sense of their past and hence ideal slaves” (Nunan 2016: 100). One does not have to accept that Central Asians became “ideal slaves” or lost any connection to their pasts, of course, to recognize the difficulties in reconstructing social attitudes from decades ago after immense societal changes. These practical issues do not even begin to scratch the surface of how to interpret these memories, of course, particularly considering their charged personal and political nature.

# CHAPTER 2: UNVEILING AND CLASS

## PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION WITHOUT PROLETARIANS?

Before beginning a discussion of the question of class in the *hujum*, it may be useful to step back and compare the *hujum* with a contemporaneous program targeted at 'backwards' peasant women, but which took a very different approach. Farnsworth (2002) describes Soviet attempts pre-collectivization to organize female peasant migrant laborers, or *batrachkas*. Just as the *hujum* was inextricable from Soviet anxieties over control of Central Asia, Farnsworth argues "It was initially the Soviet regime's anxiety over the kulak's role in the countryside that drove its efforts to ally itself with these peasant women" (64). However, she argues the commitment to women's liberation was simply "idealistic," lacking real effort behind it except when "the Soviet state feared that the revolution might be threatened without women's participation," with *batrachkas* seen "as backward, 'dark,' and lacking political consciousness" (Farnsworth 2002: 64).

While in my opinion Farnsworth takes an unduly cynical and sweeping attitude toward the Soviet attitude toward women's liberation as a whole, the desire to incorporate 'backward' women into the Soviet project in order to solidify a fracturing revolution resembles the *hujum*. This campaign also ran into similar problems as the *hujum*: local elites blocked the project, many poor peasant women clung to conservative traditions as the most secure protection, and Soviet institutes were too weak (Farnsworth 2002: 70-71, 77). However, *unlike* the *hujum*, organizing the *batrachkas* was understood as fundamentally a class project, with the liberation of women inextricable from their role in the labor process, and was carried out (after some debate) not by the Zhenotdel but the Agricultural Forestry Workers'. This calls into question Khalid (2015)'s

assertion that the Soviets did not deal with gender as a category in the *hujum*. It is clear by comparison that there were stark differences between Soviet projects that attempted to organize women as laborers and ones that attempted to organize women as women.

In addition, comparisons of this campaign and the *hujum* highlight the extent to which the Bolsheviks really did view women's oppression in Central Asia as a central question in a way they did not in other parts of the Soviet Union. This strengthens Northrop (2004)'s claim that while *byt* "mattered in Russia … it became a central, all-pervading concern in Uzbekistan" (21). Northrop continues that

> Uzbek peasants were seen as qualitatively different from their Russian equivalents: speaking a different (and linguistically unrelated) tongue; professing an Islamic identity; in short, inhabiting a religio-cultural sphere perceived by both sides as distinct. On top of these distinctions came the experience of Russian rule and the formal structures (political, economic, and military) of modern colonialism. The apparently simple fact that the veil, as a principle marker of colonial difference, did not even exist in Russia but came to sit at the very heart of Soviet policy in Uzbekistan shows the centrality of ethnic and cultural difference in shaping Bolshevism for the non-Russian periphery (22).

Part of this difference reflects the Bolsheviks' understanding of the difference between Central Asia and the rest of the Soviet Union. Soviet scholars struggled with whether to view Central Asia as having a separate 'Asiatic mode of production,' or as simply being a feudal society. (Nunan 2016: 20-25, *passim*). Either framework encouraged many Soviet scholars to see Central Asia as "stuck in a backward, premodern, 'natural' economy" (Nunan 2016: 194), which meant for them that bonds of kinship and exploitation within the family—that is, patriarchy—played an especially important role in the political economy of the region. In fact, because "a woman occupied a crucial place in a traditional household's productive activities," she "was the most exploited of its members" (Massell 1974: 161). Therefore, at least some Soviet theorists and activists came to see Muslim women as "a structural workpoint in the *traditional order*: a

potentially deviant and hence subversive stratum susceptible to militant appeal—in effect, a *surrogate proletariat* where no proletariat in the real Marxist sense existed" (Massell 1974: xxiii). Therefore, since the mode of production in Central Asia was based on family relationships, disrupting these family relationships could create revolutionary potential, in a way similar to the specific destabilizing role of the proletariat under capitalism. By incorporating women into the productive process, the state could therefore bring women into 'socialism,' thereby necessarily liberating them. Whatever the problematics of this model, it hardened into Soviet orthodoxy, as seen in the previous discussion of Aminova's work and the viewpoint of Soviet activists in Afghanistan.

This problem brings us to one of the knottiest and most complex questions: the role of class in the *hujum*.

## UNVEILING AND CLASS

While 'class' is often simply viewed as a Bolshevik imposition onto a recalcitrant Central Asian reality, many accounts of unveiling do note the class character of veiling:

> Particularly in the large cities of the southern river basins and among wealthier families, women observed rigid norms of female seclusion and many men maintained multiple wives. In other social locations, however—especially in more remote areas as well as in rural, nomadic, and lower-class families—women's lives were quite different. While underlying familial and social norms may have been no less patriarchal, these women did not necessarily veil at puberty, often had a strong public and social presence, and sometimes worked outside the home. Given the prevalence of poor rural villages throughout southern Central Asia, indeed, this pattern may have held for many and possibly most Muslim women much of the time"(Northrop 2004: 42)

Summarizing debate about the veil among Muslims generally, Cronin (2014) argues that the idea of unveiling in fact derived from elite discourse and implicitly took as its subject only elite women:

> It was of course the urban elites who incubated the modernists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it was therefore primarily urban women, especially those from the same elites, who were most present in the modernist vision. It was precisely such women who were subject to the most rigid requirements of covering in public. …. The character of emerging critiques of gender practices and veiling itself may therefore best be comprehended if modernism itself is understood as essentially an elite project (5).

Similarly, Massad (2015) notes "ironically, Soviet feminists seemed interested in liberating the rich 'feudal' and 'bourgeois' women who were veiled, rather than focus on the struggles of the majority of poor peasant and nomadic tribal women who were not" (120). Thus for Massad, the Soviet discourse of the *hujum* "shows the shared liberal values" among feminist activists in the period of whatever ideology or national origin (122). Thus, coexisting in the literature with the idea that the *hujum* represented the improper or clumsy insertion of an inappropriate Marxist framework of class struggle into Central Asia, is the idea that unveiling was, in itself, an elite discourse that fundamentally had nothing to do with the subordinated classes. The latter is, superficially, the idea that was adopted by the Party as the *hujum* was wound up, although actual practice was far more complicated than this. However, who is correct?

Kamp (2006) relies heavily on the interviews she conducted with elderly Uzbek women from 1992-1994 about their experience of the *hujum*. She emphasizes their identification with women's liberation and points out her interviewees described their lives with "a narrative of progress; [their life stories] were never framed as a narrative of unmitigated decline and disaster" (228). She also notes that "while many of them had unveiled because they were forced to do so,

none expressed any regret at the paranji's disappearance or any desire that it should again be worn" (228). This approach also calls into question Massad (2015)'s characterization of unveiling as primarily affecting elite urban women, as poorer and more rural women tended not to veil. As the work of Kamp Massell, and Northrop all agree, hujum did not only affect elite women; rather, it also provided some social space for women who had been excluded from veiling. In fact, the *hujum* campaign specifically focused on disadvantaged women outside of kinship networks: orphans, child-brides, widows, runaways, etc. (Massell 1974: 144-145). Even Cronin (2014) also notes that the Soviet spectacles of public unveilings and *paranji* burnings involved not just elite women like Huda Shar'awi in Egypt or the family of the shah in Iran, but "was performed by ordinary and poor women mobilized by the *Zhenotdel*" (21). This idea is also difficult to square with contemporary accounts such as Nukhrat's worry that even poor peasants who approved of land reform refused to unveil their wives (thus implying their wives were veiled in the first place). This idea goes directly against the Soviet hope that poor peasants would support unveiling against the desires of the *bois* and *mullahs*, and therefore her claim is likely accurate (Massell 1974). Therefore, while veiling pre-*hujum* was certainly concentrated more heavily among urban and wealthier women than poorer and rural women, it was by no means simply a campaign that ignored poor women for their elite sisters.

For prostitutes, for instance, not wearing a veil had been a sign of their shame—there is no point in women with no honor trying to protect it—but it now became an advantage for them. The question of what women would wear after unveiling also raised its head—poor women could not afford new chic clothes to replace their paranja (Northrop 2004: 101). The very fact this was an issue shows that there were poor women who did wear the veil and, for whatever reason, chose to unveil during *hujum*. Thus, while class did not affect the unveiling campaign in

the ways the Bolsheviks imagined it did, it still had a major impact. This does not call for condemning Marxist or class analysis as useless to understanding the hujum, in place of the categories of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, etc; but rather a more subtle and honest account of class integrating it with the other factors such as gender and ethnicity that are currently far more fashionable in postcolonial analysis.

## COMPARATIVE DEBATES

Unveiling in the Soviet Union did not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it reflected a wider context in which the veil had come to be one of the chief symbols of Muslim backwardness and unveiling had come to be one of the chief symbols of modernity (whether this modernity was understood as being complementary or oppositional to Islam). This anti-veiling discourse "was a key trope in a wider discourse of modernism which sought to explain and also, crucially, to remedy the perceived backwardness of Muslim societies. According to this discourse, the entire social organism suffered from the debilitating effects of the veiling and seclusion of half the population, and the half responsible for raising the next generation at that" (Cronin 2014: 2). While these debates drew on European categories and thought, they also became inseparable from wider struggle "about Middle Eastern self-defence … from a relentlessly expanding European hegemony" (Cronin 2014: 2). Thus, anti-veiling discourse drew on European categories and thought, but also was understood as a way to *resist* European hegemony, suggesting the ambiguities of unveiling campaigns as they played out in practice.

Furthermore, anti-veiling discourse led to a backlash arguing modernism in the Muslim world meant abandoning Islam for the West "was a threat to the entire social order, endangering the moral purity of women and raising the spectre of chaos, of society being riven by *fitna* or

turmoil" (Cronin 2014: 8). The arguments and tropes mobilized by the Uzbeks who resisted the *hujum*, therefore, were not simply a local backlash but reflected a transnational discourse of resistance of 'modernity' and 'Westernization.'

Cronin (2014) also engages in extensive comparison of the Soviet unveiling campaign with similar contemporary campaigns. She is correct in her claim that the Soviets did not desire to homogenize or Westernize dress, and in fact encouraged differentiation in dress between nationalities. This distinguishes the policy from its manifestation in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, where clothing modernization was meant to create a new, universal, monolithic national identity (14). In the nationalist modernizing countries, mass clothing reform started with men's clothing, and men were expected to encourage their wives to unveil. Cronin argues this emphasis distinguishes these countries from the Soviet countries, where anti-veiling was justified on the basis of women's liberation (Cronin 2014: 14). However, Cronin's statement here is incorrect. The Soviets, rather than "occasionally" (Cronin 2014: 14), *frequently*, in fact *systematically*, relied on pressure from husbands to encourage unveiling among women. This was especially true in the first phase of the unveiling campaign, which largely concentrated on the wives of party members and government officials (Massell 1974: 233).

> Party members were called upon to carry out the new directive immediately and without reservations; they were to insure the unveiling not only of women in their immediate family but also all of their female relatives; most important, the practice of veiling and of seclusion in general in a communist's family membership in party ranks. At the same time, in a somewhat softer vein, female communists were asked to 'undertake the obligation' not to wear the veil (Massell 1974: 235).

Therefore, to a degree Soviet discourse actually drew on existing patriarchal networks of kinship to enact unveiling: communist men were held responsible for ensuring the unveiling of their wives, but of all their kin. This led to great tension among and between Uzbek male

communist *cadres*, who by and large were not able or willing to undertake such a hugely socially subversive step (Massell 1974: 235). In fact, accusations that one's party comrades were being lax in getting their families to unveil became a political tool, as Massell (1974) shows with the example of high Uzbek officials being heckled by their colleagues because they had not yet unveiled their wives (235-236). Therefore, far from being some pure exhortation directly to Uzbek women to overthrow all patriarchal shackles immediately, the Soviet unveiling campaign centrally depended on men to initiate the new form of life (although perhaps not to quite the same extent as in Turkey and Iran).

The ostensible purpose of the *hujum* was indeed women's liberation, not cultural homogenization; however, the vocally anti-Islam aspects of the *hujum* meant it sat in uneasy tension with the (equally real) commitment to state multiculturalism. This imperative probably did shape the fact that women's but not men's clothing was targeted (and for women, specifically the *paranji* and *chachvon* rather than all forms of head covering or folk dress).

Cronin also incorrectly states "the redefinition of unveiling as a demonstration of a superior morality was completely absent" and that the *hujum* represented "her complete liberation from the confines of a bourgeois morality" (Cronin 2014: 18). While not as pervasive or central as similar claims in Turkey or Iran, associations of veiling with sexual deviance certainly existed, as Northrop (2004) notes:

> In an almost religious way, the veil could be blamed for causing wicked or sinful behavior. … Casting moral aspersions on the veil and the women who wore it attacked the religious and moral defense of female seclusion at its heart. Rather than being a mark of devout piety, the paranji was said to drive women to immorality and deviance by turning them into lesbians.

It is true that Alexandra Kollontai had radical views on sexual liberation, but these views did not determine the course of the *hujum* in any way. In fact, Zhenotdel workers were deeply

insecure about the accusations that unveiling led to promiscuity and prostitution, and this fundamentally shaped many aspects of the hujum. In fact, at certain points during the *hujum* (especially in late 1927) the party and the Zhenotdel exhorted activists *not* to work among prostitutes, "since the presence of such women could compromise women's liberation and the unveiling campaign in the public eye. In the end, prostitutes' class interests proved less salient than … the risk of tainting the hujum with even a whiff or prostitution" (Northrop 2004: 102). The party went to great lengths to try to ensure unveiled women did not behave in a way that would give conservatives' grounds for their claims that unveiling inevitably led to prostitution. (Northrop 2004: 197-200). This led to absurd situations such as a woman fired in 1930 for smoking, even as smoking "was simultaneously being held up in other party circles as a token of female liberation" (Northrop 2004: 199). Therefore, one should not exaggerate the radicality of the *hujum*'s attack on gender relations in comparison to the 'purely nationalist' campaigns in Turkey and Iran. The *hujum* certainly was more deeply engaged with women's liberation and not at all concerned with cultural homogenization than these campaigns, but it too reflected the preconceptions about the proper sexual behavior of unveiled women.

## CLASS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Northrop's analysis also shows the complex interaction between gender, class, and power that affected the enforcement of the *hujum*. However, in the literature, the one discourse that seems utterly alien to Central Asia is class. Almost all other works on the *hujum*, whether they are relatively sympathetic to the Soviet project or not, see 'class' as an alien imposition onto a society where no one thought of themselves as a class. Class appears as an administrative strategy for categorizing those it ruled and rationalizing away their revolts: "When the Chust

affair [a violent uprising against *hujum*] was shoehorned into a classbased analytical scheme, it no longer signified broad-based popular resistance to the hujum or against Soviet power" (Northrop 2004: 116-7). For Adeeb Khalid, who unlike Northrop rejects the idea of a unified Uzbek Muslim opposition to a colonial Soviet Union, nonetheless only refers to class as a discourse Uzbek elites attempted to manipulate to gain the favor of the center or by Russian settlers to justify colonial oppression of 'non-proletarian' Muslims (Khalid 2015). For Nunan, Soviet activists in Afghanistan, by "[i]nsisting that not just the Uzbek but also the Afghan story were best explained through the lens of class … drained the Soviet history of the relevance it could have" (Nunan 2016: 195).

Moreover, writers on the *hujum* continually emphasize the sheer inability of Marxism to plot any kind of revolutionary strategy in Central Asia. And writers such as Nunan are correct to highlight that the Soviets in Central Asia faced entirely new questions, such as "Could countries with no working class have revolutions? Which nationality or ethnicity was supposed to take power in a 'tribal' society? And, crucially, how were native Communist Parties to arise in such conditions?" (Nunan 2016: 21). They are also correct to emphasize that the Soviets in Central Asia had no ready answers to these questions, nor did they (arguably) ever succeed in answering them. However, this does not justify the complete dismissal of class as a unit of analysis. No author concludes that, because of the failure of the *hujum*, gender is simply not relevant to analyzing Uzbekistan; but many authors seem content to dismiss class factors merely on the grounds that Soviet mobilizations of 'class' were often flawed.

## A SURROGATE OR AN ACTUAL PROLETARIAT?

Much of the debate about Massell's thesis about the *surrogate proletariat* surrounds whether or not the Bolsheviks actually viewed Central Asian Muslim women as a surrogate proletariat, a revolutionary agent in a region without a conventional proletariat. However, fewer writers (including Massell himself) have given serious systematic attention to his secondary claim that the Soviets wanted Uzbek women to unveil not to become a *surrogate* proletariat, but an *actual* proletariat. For instance, Massell (1974) quotes a Soviet official bursting out with perhaps unintentional honesty: "how can a veiled, heavily clad [Moslem] women serve as a tractor- or combine-driver? How can she operate cotton gins, [and] textile machines, … when she is trammelled by a veil from head to foot …, when even in broad daylight, in the street, she can hardly see where to put her foot down?" (232) He argues that coexisting with the push for women's liberation was "an intense (and distinctly growing) preoccupation with Moslem women primarily as an under-utilized source of human energy" (Massell 1974: 165). This can be seen in the close association between getting women to unveil and getting them to enter the production processes that we encountered before in Aminova (1977), Neuberger (2014) and Nunan (2016). This also helps to explain why unveiling was still encouraged after the end of the *hujum*, even as the drive for collectivization swamped the *hujum* in ideological and political importance (Northrop 2004, Kamp 2006).

According to Tokhtakhodjaeva, collectivization signaled the end of liberation for women and for the Uzbek people in general. While during "a brief period in the 1920s" Muslim women were able to gain economic power under the new land reform policies, under collectivization "men and women lost not only their property but also their personal liberty. They became chained to the *kolkhoz*" (103-104). She claims that "[t]he cotton mono-culture ruled rural Uzbekistan" (107) and recounts the sorry fate of women glorified as 'heroes of labour' who

worked themselves to death in the fields, and whose fate barely changed with the mechanization of cotton (109-111). She argues cheap female labor was the key factor needed for the state to appropriate agricultural raw materials from Uzbekistan "to be used in the textile, silk spinning and carpet manufacturing units of Russia" (55). Thus, she concludes that "the so-called 'liberation of women' was in fact just a loud political campaign to induct the mass of women into the production process" (104). She recounts the policies that discriminated against women: limited maternal leave and discrimination in calculating pensions; limits on divorce and abortion during the Stalinist era, etc. (104-105). She is sarcastic about "the mythical freedom of Soviet Asia, symbolised by a smiling young woman collecting cotton with a medal on her breast" (107). The analysis of unveiling campaigns in Bulgaria and Afghanistan above also shows that many later socialist officials viewed unveiling as a necessary prerequisite to detaching women from their ties to the family and household in order to incorporate them into the production process.

Many Central Asians perceived this oppression not as *forced modernization*, but precisely as a *failure* or *blocking* of modernization. Tokhtakhodjaeva argues the lack of mechanization in agriculture required intensive exploitation of female workers on the *kolkhozy*, undergirded by such policies as Stakhanovism and widespread use of piece-wages (121). Khalid cites those *jadids* who came to believe the Soviets were practicing a form of 'red colonialism' and whose criticisms echo the later critique of 'underdevelopment' among colonized peoples (Khalid 2015). Central Asian officials repeatedly complained about their lack of influence over economic affairs directly affected their regions, going so far as to call European Communists "colonizers with party cards" (Loring 2014: 79).

These economic concerns raise the questions of whether colonialism should be understood as primarily a cultural and discursive or as an economic phenomenon, as well as

exactly what kind of economic dealings occurred between Moscow and Central Asia, how they occurred, and who they primarily benefited. Before going more deeply into these questions, however, it is necessary to take a step back to discuss current theories of colonialism and how they have been applied (with varying success) to the Soviet Union.

# CHAPTER 3: POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND THE SOVIET UNION

## POSTMODERNISM, MARXISM, AND THE SOVIET UNION

The shift in interpretation of the *hujum*, from Massell's tale of an aggressive modernizing power trying to transform a recalcitrant traditional society to Kamp's story of a flawed but meaningful campaign for women's liberation that reflected divisions *within* Uzbek society more than divisions between Uzbeks and Russians, reflects the larger shift among revisionist historians of the Soviet Union from "the antagonistic 'state against unwilling society' model" to "the social forces and dynamics that evolved, supported, and subverted Soviet governance during Stalinism" (Kassymbekova 2017: 2). This shift, among other things, reflects the turn in Soviet studies toward cultural and post-structural approaches (Kassymbekova 2017: 4). However, this turn has been (in good postmodern fashion) itself highly diffuse and contradictory. Northrop's account, for example, draws heavily on poststucturalist and postmodern theory to present the *hujum* as an Orientalist enterprise, with Uzbeks drawing traditional "weapons of the weak" as part of an essentially anticolonial resistance to Soviet rule.

Such analysis, which turns from the political and material to the cultural, runs the risk of viewing Orientalism or Eurocentrism "not as an ideology or mode of representation but as itself the very basis of domination in the colonial and modern imperial contexts" (Lazarus 2004: 43). In my opinion, Northrop (2004) runs into this trap when he writes:

> The very categories of analysis that Bolsheviks brought to Central Asia prevented them from understanding, let alone coping with, Uzbek responses and resistance to the hujum. Ideologies—by which I mean something wider, deeper, and more pervasive yet more diffuse than a simple set of formal doctrines or consciously voiced political beliefs—played a key role. Bolshevik habits of mind, or ideological filters,

> helped harden party resolve to continue harsh attacks on the veil even after it was clear that such tactics were not working well (71)

This style of analysis abjures any explanation of how mindsets shift and change in response to external circumstances—especially as the story of the *hujum* is one of constant shifts and changes on the part of the party leadership. It defines the Bolsheviks' actions in Central Asia solely in terms of the words and categories they used, without really explaining why they held these beliefs and why they clung to them so tenaciously. And, furthermore, it contradicts Northrop's own claim later that "Soviet policy in Central Asia—even under Stalin—remained an object of continued negotiation, with few answers predetermined and little guidance available from above" (Northrop 2004: 285).

In fact, contrary to the idea of hardened ideological Bolsheviks facing down a non-ideological traditional society, socialist politics was by no means alien to Muslim societies at the time:

> Popular interests in socialism and in Russia spread across the Ottoman Empire before the Bolshevik Revolution and World War I. The incorporation of the Middle East into the capitalist world market and the disruption of local economies that it entailed forced many around the Mashriq to leave their homes in search of economic opportunities. As Ilham Khuri-Makdisi has shown, between 1860 and 1914 the circulation of people and information along new communications networks contributed to the spread of socialist, anarchist, and other radical ideas and circles in Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria (Kirasirova 2017: 19)

Kirasirova (2017) argues that although these Bolshevik calls may have been somewhat similar to earlier imperial Russian appeals, they differed fundamentally because of "the oppressor/oppressed nations dichotomy" and "the 1920s idea that great-power (or Russian) chauvinism posed a graver danger than local nationalism" (8). It was only in the 1930s that "Russians were again raised to the rank of 'first among equals'" (8). However, Kirasirova's

study focuses on the Arab Section of the Communist University for Toilers of the East (KUTV), which served Muslim students from outside the USSR. They were incorporated into the Soviet mission but "were expected to achieve these goals in a foreign context" (34). Thus, the dynamic was significantly different for these students than for those Muslim Communists who lived within the boundaries of the USSR. For the students at KUTV, the ruling elites of Arab countries were their chief enemy, to the extent that "the majority of students who returned home, including the disaffected ones who eventually left the party, were either imprisoned or killed in anticommunist purges" (31). As she further explains, "What was clear that neither the Narkomnats nor the Comintern representatives saw the students' 'Easternness' as something essential or static. The KUTV experiment was not built around any assumption of a romantic, essential, or inviolable Eastern anticolonial subject" (33). This project, "[w]hile still premised on Enlightenment notions of progress and improvement … did not deprive students of agency" but "brought many freedoms" and "allowed Arab Section students to actively participate in a unique pedagogical experiment and to chart paths untrodden by Marxist-Leninist theories" (33). This example should caution us against assuming that use of 'European' categories or concepts does not necessarily mean that non-European peoples cannot themselves take hold of these categories and make them their own.

On the other end of the spectrum, Edgar (2006) argues that Soviet policies should not be equated with British and French colonialism. She points out that the Soviets made a genuine, wide-ranging effort to overturn existing gender relations, due to their ideological commitments, while the British and French did not interfere in Islamic or cultural practices unless it was convenient, and generally "refrained from changing indigenous family law" (Edgar 2006: 257). Lastly, while the British and French used the image of the 'oppressed Muslim woman' to

legitimize colonialism, they had little interest in promoting change in gender roles in their own societies. The Soviets, however, "sought the same transformation for *all* women without differentiating between metropole and periphery" (Edgar 2006: 264). Thus, she compares the Soviet efforts not to colonial feminism but to the modernization campaigns of newly postcolonial Muslim nations. However, she sees it as "not imperial in intention" but "imperial in effect" (Edgar 2006: 272), because it led to an identification of unveiling and women's rights with foreign encroachments.

Because "[t]he Soviet civilizing mission was not underpinned by the racial or ethnic superiority of any one group, and Russians themselves had to be transformed" (Khalid 2006: 250), Khalid (2006) maintains the Soviet state should be understood as a 'modernizing' power, trying to remake its own people, in the same sense as Turkey under Atatürk. Similarly, McBrien (2009) categorizes the *hujum* and simply "among the most extreme cases of categorical transformation" that all modern, secular nations have enacted (130).

The "Soviet remaking of Central Asia" did not resemble the minimal engagement of the imperial powers, who (at least, according to Khalid's and Edgar's accounts) only sought to interfere coercively to get the resources they wanted, rather to reshape society as a whole. Rather, it "makes sense only as the work of a different kind of modern polity, the activist, interventionist, mobilizational state that seeks to sculpt its citizenry into an ideal image" (Khalid 2006: 232). Such states required their citizens to actively participate in the state and "experienced transformations more massive than anything wrought by colonial empires" (Khalid 2006: 233)

## POSTCOLONIAL THEORY: GOOD FOR THE WEST, GOOD FOR THE EAST?

The model for much of contemporary poststructural analysis about gender and colonialism has been Gayatri Spivak's famous 1988 essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", which involves a lengthy analysis of the practice of *suttee*, in which widows threw themselves onto the funeral pyres of their husbands, in British India. Spivak notes how "the protection of woman … becomes a signifier for the establishment of a *good* society", requiring "the redefinition as a crime of what had been tolerated, known, or adulated as ritual" and causing the "leap" of such practices "from private to public" (Spivak 1988: 94). She spoke of the difficulty of interpreting the meaning of such acts to women involved from colonial records:

> As one goes down the grotesquely mistranscribed names of these women, the sacrificed widows, in the police reports included in the records of the East India Company, one cannot put together a 'voice.' The most one can sense is the immense heterogeneity breaking through even such a skeletal and ignorant account….Faced with the dialectically interlocking sentences that are constructible as 'White men are saving brown women from brown men' and 'The women wanted to die', the postcolonial woman intellectual asks the question of simple semiosis—What does this mean?—and begins to plot a history (Spivak 1988: 93).

Spivak continues with an analysis of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, a young Indian woman involved in resistance movements who, in an attempt to preserve the security of her cell, committed suicide. She chose to kill herself while menstruating, in order to show that she had not killed herself because she had become pregnant out of wedlock. Thus, Spivak interprets her suicide as "an unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text" praising this sort of careful Derridean deconstruction that avoids "appropriating the other by assimilation" (Spivak 1988: 103-4).

It is easy to see the attraction of such a model for Soviet studies. For one, studying the Soviet Union often requires trying to reconstruct complex social situations largely on the basis of police records, faced with an "immense heterogeneity" laying just beyond the page. For another, the controversy over *suttee* seems (at least superficially) parallel to the controversy over the

*paranji*: the way "protection of women" becomes the signifier of a good society; the wrenching of what were once considered *private* affairs into the very center of public life; and the apparent trap of being caught between the simple narratives of, one, white (communist) women saving brown women from brown men, or two, that the women simply wanted to veil. Indeed, Northrop cites this very section of her essay in his work (Northrop 2004: 243). However, the wholesale imposition of a framework meant to explain Western colonialism onto the Soviet Union raises severe methodological problems. Lazarus (2012) argues against the ready use of postcolonial tropes to analyze Soviet societies, where one can simply "identify the templates of orientalism and hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence, nationalism as a derivative discourse, and the subaltern who cannot speak" (118).

In fact, he takes for granted that "the identification of the Soviet Union—successor to the Russian imperialism—as a specific *colonial* power is also well attested" (Lazarus 2012: 118). Lazarus argues that the problem with postcolonialism is that, first, it misreads Western colonialism by interpreting it as a civilizational conflict between west and east, north and south, obscuring "colonialism as an historical process [that] involved the forced integration of hitherto uncapitalized societies, or societies in which the capitalist mode of production was not hegemonic, into a capitalist world-system" (Lazarus 2012: 120). This process led to the wholesale restructuring of existing social relations, circuits of production, social classes, and ruling elites (Lazarus 2012: 120). Second, Lazarus notes that it is the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, the fact that we live in post-Soviet times, that has led to the discrediting of Marxist critique. Therefore, it is incoherent to refer to post-Soviet societies as 'postcolonial,' since the demise of the Soviet Union in fact led to these societies' incorporation into the capitalist world-system, in the style of classic colonialism (Lazarus 2012: 121).

However, Lazarus fails to outline a clear alternative to postcolonial analysis. If 1989 represents incorporation into the world capitalist system—that is, colonization—does this imply post-Soviet countries have in fact gone from *not* being colonized to *becoming* colonized? How are we to reconcile Lazarus's equation of capitalism and colonialism, on the one hand, and his claim that Soviet societies were isolated from the world capitalist market, on the other, with his claim that the Soviet Union certainly *was* a form of colonialism?

Indeed, if one subtracts the specific references to capitalism his description of closely reflects the experience of Central Asia under the First Five-Year Plan: the imposition of wage labor, the destruction and reconstruction of existing markets, the displacement and proletarianization of peasants, "[r]uling elites …made, unmade, and remade" (Lazarus 2012: 120). However, one cannot simply subtract 'capitalism' in this way, since his whole analysis relies on a specific claim about the capitalist mode of production.

However, this definition does suggest something important about the colonization/modernization debate. It is true that modernizing nation-states seek to mobilize their subjects as *participatory citizens*, in ways that colonial empires do not, because they see their subjects as fundamentally inferior and not part of the nation. In fact, McBrien (2009) argues "This feeling of being Soviet may be one of the most important differences between residents of the USSR and inhabitants of many places colonized by Western powers" (131). Therefore, she baldly concludes that "A colonizer/colonized dichotomy did not exist in Central Asia" (131). However, it is wrong to contrast modernizing and colonializing empires as if colonial empires did not fundamentally upend their subjects' way of life. On the contrary, as Lazarus describes, colonialism fundamentally changes the modes of life, overturns existing elites, and generates new ways of being. I suggest the tendency to see the colonial empires as passive, while the

modernizing states are seen as active, results from a tendency to focus on the *state*. Under Western colonialism, the fundamental agent of these processes is the market, rather than the state. Therefore, in contrasting the conscious, state-planned initiatives of Western imperial powers with the conscious, state-planned initiatives of the independent Muslim nations and the Soviet Union, one is only getting half the story.

Moore (2001) discusses the complexities of referring to the Soviet Union as 'colonial.' On the one hand, he cites such progressive measures against Great Russian chauvinism, official sponsorship of minority culture, support of anticolonial struggles, and "its liberation of women from the harem and the veil" (122). On the other hand, he cites such regressive measures as forced deportations of entire ethnic groups, forced settlement of nomadic peoples, the "monoculture" of Central Asian agriculture, and Soviet military interventions abroad (123). Moore (2001) identifies both Russian and Soviet colonialism as "dynastic, in which a power conquers neighbor peoples …. result[ing] in the disappearance of the subject peoples as such" (118). He argues the reluctance to identify Russian and Soviet enterprises as colonial results from one, the fact that they conquered neighboring and not overseas peoples and two, that Russia is seen as apart from the East/West dichotomy that colonialism allegedly depends on (119). In addition, Moore (2001) notes how "the standard Western story about colonization is that it is always accompanied by orientalization," while in fact it is Russia that was orientalized by those Western European peoples it conquered (121).

An assessment of whether or not the Soviet Union was a colonial enterprise cannot simply add up the benefits to Central Asians, subtract the losses, and call it a day. One cannot simply cite someone's perception they are oppressed; after all, anyone can mobilize the rhetoric of oppression and colonization. Southern plantation owners, for instance, certainly believed

themselves to be the victims of an expansive imperialist industrial power, and indeed in a sense they were, but this does not make the American Civil War an anticolonial struggle. Similarly, one cannot simply cite someone's perception that they are not oppressed; plentiful examples can be furnished of clearly oppressed groups that nonetheless have substantial minorities within them that benefit from and identify with the central power. One can simply cite both viewpoints and throw up one's hands at the essentially paradoxical and heterogeneous nature of the Soviet Union, but this is not a satisfying solution for the long haul.

Useful here is Cleary (2004)'s analysis of Ireland as a British colony. As he notes, this concept "does not at all rest on the assumption that the country was somehow, culturally or otherwise, 'outside' of Europe and hence part of the 'Third World'" but rather that Ireland's "structural composition … [was] objectively colonial in character" (105). This idea is often objected to on the grounds that the Irish rarely raised their opposition to Britain in anticolonial terms and, moreover, often overtly identified with and participated in the British imperial project, particularly as immigrants/colonizers (105). However, Cleary argues against viewing the problem purely on the level of discourse and consciousness: "the theoretical value of the term 'colonialism' …. can never be made to rest simply on the subjective consciousness of the colonized" (108). Colonialism is an objective relationship of power, which can engender all sorts of different kinds of subjectivities. However, one cannot work backward from by analyzing different individuals' subjectivities and generating a macro-picture. This kind of small-bore analysis is certainly necessary, in order to check back grand theories that in fact turn out not to explain the reality on the ground. However, at the end of the day there must be some underlying theory to synthesize experience, since any great historical change will generate a great deal of opposing, contradictory experiences.

The most careful treatment of these debates is Kandiyoti (2002). As Kandiyoti (2002) notes, this question of colonialism is especially fraught in the case of the Bolsheviks, who "evolved their own critique of colonialism as part and parcel of their ideological onslaught on the Russian ancien regime and claimed to have made a decisive break from their imperial past" (286). Kandiyoti further notes that postcolonial theory arose precisely as a rejection of "the leading paradigms of development" and "universalist claims of grand narratives of emancipation," arguing that modernity's "dark underside became manifest in the practices of racism, colonialism, and sexism" (Kandiyoti 2002: 281). This shift, as Lazarus (2004) also notes, entailed a move away from defining colonialism as a system of economic exploitation to one of cultural or civilizational domination.

As Kandiyoti (2002) warns, simply importing an analysis based on Western Orientalism onto Soviet Central Asia "would not only fail to capture the specificities of the Soviet case ….it would limit more open-ended explorations into the possible meanings of post-coloniality itself" (294). He states that "[t]he close analytic connection between capitalist expansion and imperialism by and large retarded a parallel discussion of the role of the Soviet state" (286). Because analyses focused on colonialism in the twentieth century tended to tie it to the Western capitalist powers, and because the theories of postcolonialism that arose later tended to deemphasize or abjure material factors all together, the question of colonialism with regard to Central Asia and the Soviets is sorely undertheorized. In an attempt to provide a more detailed discussion, Kandiyoti (2002) cites the arguments of Khazanov (1995), who argues that Central Asia suffered from underdevelopment as a result of unequal exchange of material goods with the center, as well as Shahrani (1993), who argues that the Soviet state essentially destroyed Central Asian traditional society in order to create the cotton monoculture. However, Kandiyoti

ultimately argues that more careful investigation of the production of raw agricultural materials in the Soviet Union is needed for a deeper, more productive understanding of the relationship between Central Asia and the Soviet leadership.

Most important for this paper is Kandiyoti's (2002) analysis the prevalence of "contradictory interpretations" which emphasize either "rapid modernization and radical change" or "cultural stasis and immobility" (291). These interpretations stem from "*an apparent inability to recognize the mutual imbrication of Soviet institutions with local cultural forms*" (291, emphasis mine). As he notes, one of the worst offenders here are Soviet scholars themselves and their "particular attachment to the concept of 'traditionalism'" (291). Thus, scholars have failed to fully set out how exactly the new Soviet system came to incorporate older cultural, political, and economic forms, fundamentally transforming both systems in the process. Therefore, the 'persistence' of certain cultural forms should not be interpreted as 'holdovers' from 'traditional society' or 'feudalism,' but rather as the creation of a new kind of society.

This viewpoint also contradicts McBrien (2009)'s analysis that Sovietization was not experienced as colonization because it offered tangible benefits to Central Asians:

> [identification as Soviet] was at least partly due to measurable and observable changes that Central Asians witnessed in their lives and the discursive politics promoting them. While women unveiled, they were offered new possibilities for work, recreation, and home life. Notions of gender equality were advanced and discursively tied to Soviet modernization projects. Rational, scientific investigation was touted as the means to personal and societal advancement, and certain real technological accomplishments—small ones at the local level like electricity, plumbing, and telephones as well as large prestige projects such as steel plants and a space programme—helped shore up faith in these ideals. Not all Soviet rhetoric was reality. However, as Deniz Kandiyoti has argued, if we compare the Middle East and Central Asia through the rubric of postcolonialism, one of the most striking differences is 'the diffusion of the fruits of Soviet

> development to the lower strata of society [that] separates Central Asian societies from those of the Middle East' (2002: 295).

McBrien (2009), as well as Kamp (2006) is correct to emphasize the importance that material improvements played a crucial role in causing people to identify themselves as 'Soviet.' However, she overemphasizes the extent to which older identities crumbled before the 'Soviet' identity as well as the extent to which the Soviet regime actually provided a new, modern economy. Rather, as discussed above with regard to Tokhtakhodjaeva, many analyses show the extent to which the modernization of the Soviet Union as a whole actually entailed a *lack* of modernization in Central Asia.

## AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND COLONIZATION

Indeed, crucial to understanding the relationships between Moscow and Central Asia are the larger economic factors that drove the behavior of the Soviet leadership in the 1920s and 1930s. As Loring (2014) argues, "Although most scholars recognize the economic logic of Soviet involvement in Central Asia, they do not tie it to social and cultural developments, and few have yet examined in detail how these economic policies and practices were articulated in the lived experiences of Central Asians" (82). Accordingly, Loring (2014) identifies "Soviet colonialism" as "the unintended outcome of the regime's response to conditions on the world market" (80). Due to the need to increase exports and restrict imports in order to fund industrialization, Central Asia became for the leadership one great cotton field. Because its economy became based on the export of raw agricultural materials, Central Asia became "economically dependent on the rest of the USSR for trade goods and foodstuffs" (80). Therefore "forces exogenous to the periphery, such as the metropole's trade policies or price fluctuations in external markets of export commodities, largely determine the development of

transport and trade routes" (85). Loring's analysis therefore pushes back against the tendency to consider Central Asia as fundamentally different from Western colonialism because it was insulated from the world market, which is suggested by Kandiyoti (2002), Lazarus (2004), and Nunan (2016). Drawing on the work of Michael Hechter on 'internal colonialism' in the British Isles, he argues for the importance of "the cultural division of labor" in ordering the Soviet economy (84). Thus, "the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population remained outside Central Asia's nascent industrialization" and were separate from the development of a large, skilled industrial workforce that helped to define the process of Stalinist industrialization in other regions of the Soviet Union (93).

Similarly, Teichmann (2007) argues that the need to increase irrigation and cotton production in Central Asia in order to industrialize the rest of the country was the factor that fundamentally undercut the Bolshevik project of decolonization in Central Asia. As Northrop (2004) notes, the Bolshevik Party struggled in the 1920s with "the paradoxes of an avowedly anticolonial, liberationist state trying to administer a colonial empire in the name of 'civilization'" (285). Teichmann (2007) makes these paradoxes concrete by pointing out how cotton production "was an unpopular symbol of colonial rule and central intervention in the local economy (501). As he notes, "[m]odernizing Uzbekistan had come down to controlling kolkhoz income and its distribution, counting working days in the kolkhoz, setting cotton yields and enforcing compliance with the water distribution plan" (507), while concerns with "cultural revolution" were largely abandoned (507). Contrary to other accounts which emphasize the fundamental material changes brought about by the Soviets, he argues that in the 1930s "the means of canal building and maintenance had not changed and remained based on the obligatory manual labour of large numbers of peasants" (511).

Therefore, to suggest that Central Asia was an internal colony of the Soviet Union is not to suggest an unbridgeable ontological and epistemological divide between 'natives' and 'Soviets,' or that Central Asians lacked agency under Soviet rule, or that no substantial number of Central Asians participated in the Soviet project or benefited from it in non-illusory ways. It is, rather, to state that the economic relations shaping the dynamic between the Soviet Union and Central Asia entailed a hierarchical relationship, and that this power dynamic could not be overcome purely at the level of discourse or agency; and that this power dynamic suffused the relationship between the Soviet leadership and Central Asia, regardless of the subjective desires of many of the actors involved.

In addition, I disagree with Kassymbekova (2017) that such analysis "can divert us from understanding the choices people made and the actions they took in concrete situations, as well as how they pursued, corrected, or distanced themselves from them" (6). In fact, only can only understand why certain choices were available and not others, and how these 'concrete situations' came to arrive in the first place, with the help of the "meta-narratives and holistic explanations" (Kassymbekova 7: 2017) that postmodern approaches reject. I also suggest that Loring's approach in fact allows for a more fertile understanding of the contingency and complexity of the Soviet leadership's relationship with Central Asia. He sees the development of Soviet colonialism as a contingent reality which happened against the leadership's will and without their conscious planning, as a result of forces outside both their and Central Asians' control. Teichmann (2007), similarly, concludes that "[w]hereas Central Asian Bolsheviks had striven to achieve de-colonization through state and party institutions throughout the 1920s, these goals were superseded at the end of the decade when Moscow impose the rapid expansion of

cotton production on the region" (513). Such approaches by no means assume that such processes are complete, or that the concrete struggles that occur on the ground do not affect the formation of policy. However, they do push back against the tendency in poststructural analysis for everything to dissolve into the interaction of discourses, in which power is everywhere and nowhere, and the wider context of important historical events is lost.

In addition, Loring (2014) suggests that "the exclusion of native cadres from economic decision making channeled their energies into economic development, linguistic reform, the expansion of women's rights, and the closure of religious institutions" (83). Thus, Loring suggests that policies like the *hujum* in fact represented the weakness of native cadres, who were shunted into policies of cultural transformation while the real power—of who would control Central Asia's agricultural products—lay beyond their grasp. However, while I agree with Loring's overall emphasis, much more sophisticated work would need to be done to fully explain policies such as the *hujum* and how, at more than an abstract level, they relate to the wider economic changes that the Soviets brought to Central Asia. Indeed, while the analysis of collectivization put forward by him and Teichmann explains how the Soviets may have *become* a colonizing power in the 1930s, they emphasize the indeterminacy and uncertainty of Soviet policy in the 1920s.

## BACK TO THE QUESTION OF PERIODIZATION

Therefore, they are of limited use in understanding the question of this paper: was the *hujum*, itself, a colonizing policy? On the one hand, one can point to the continuation of unveiling during collectivization noted by several sources, as well as the use of unveiling to incorporate women into production in other campaigns inspired by the *hujum*, to argue for a

fundamental continuity in policy. On the other hand, one can examine how under collectivization unveiling became an incident part of joining the *kolkhoz*—still part of establishing and reinscribing a Soviet identity, but far from the centerpiece of political life that it became in the late 1920s.

In order to resolve this question, in my opinion, far more thorough research would have to be done on the actual extent of unveiling throughout the late 1920s and the 1930s, and how this unveiling related to the vast economic changes that occurred with collectivization. In addition, more research would need to be done on the NEP years in Central Asia, both the material and cultural chanes that occurred in women's lives, and how these factors interacted. The fact that a full-frontal assault on the veil, unaccompanied by major economic change, was not successful suggests Massell's Communists were right to conclude that the strategy of the *hujum* was ineffective. The drive to exploit Central Asia for its raw agricultural products did not begin with collectivization. During the 1920s, the Soviet government dramatically increased its regulation of trade, until it "effectively controlled the cotton production" as well as the silk industry (Kamp 2006: 190). Clear economic dominance over Central Asia, as the region was essential to the extractive industries and agricultural production, was always important to the Soviets (Massell 1974: 4-5). However, it would be anachronistic to project the struggles over collectivization and agricultural production of the 1930s back to the 1920s. In addition, if the *hujum* was simply a colonial policy fundamentally meant to increase cotton production, why was it launched in the mid-1920s and why was it abandoned as a central priority just as the drive to increase cotton production occurred?

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As a tentative conclusion, however, I would argue the *hujum* ought to be understood as a process *both* of external colonization *and* of internal modernization. The Bolsheviks clearly viewed Central Asia in exoticizing, Orientalizing terms, and the *hujum* was driven by the idea that Central Asia was uniquely defined by patriarchy in a way that distinguished women's oppression under Islam from women's oppression elsewhere. However, Uzbek society was not monolithic and for many women, the *hujum* did offer a meaningful chance of liberation. The *hujum* intersected with the needs and desires of Uzbek women, but only sometimes and even then imperfectly. The process often enthused and mobilized indigenous women, but was rarely actually initiated by them. The *hujum* thus exemplifies the complex and contradictory tangle of economic and political movements in the Soviet 1920s, where inherent structural tensions often produced strident cultural campaigns. The advent of the First Five Year Plan, which was itself produced by these economic and political tensions, fundamentally absorbed and surpassed these cultural concerns.

## CONCLUSION

The *hujum* represented an important process in the development of a Soviet Central Asia. I argue that, while comparisons with other unveiling campaigns are illuminating and helpful, the Soviet unveiling campaign differed in fundamental ways from both unveiling campaigns in European colonies and in independent Muslim nations, and should be understood on its own terms. Fundamentally, I argue that the *hujum* was an attempt to jumpstart the revolutionary process in Central Asia during a period (the late 1920s) when there was severe anxiety within the Communist Party about the course of the revolution. This anxiety reflected the tensions that developed over the course of NEP and the debate over industrialization, which ultimately culminated in the First Five Year Plan with its calls for super-rapid industrialization and collectivization. This drive fundamentally transformed the meaning and purpose of the *hujum*, demoting it from an idealistic crusade at which spectacular cultural displays were meant to break down age-old oppressions, to part of a process to make Uzbek women more suitable subjects for the agriculture labor that was required of them under the First Five-Year Plan. The economic aspect of the *hujum* was always there, and the cultural/liberatory aspect never fully disappeared. However, there is a significant split in 1929 that reflects the 'great turn' that the Soviet Union underwent as a whole.

The idea of unveiling was not alien to Central Asia at the time, nor was the *hujum* wholly rejected. Many Uzbek women who participated found empowerment in the process, and many who did not did so out of intimidation from their communities rather than rejection of the idea in itself. However, the fact that many Uzbek women were able to gain a level of liberation and power from the *hujum* that they would not have acquired otherwise does not make the *hujum* a bottom-up process. Nor does the fact that Uzbek women had agency and were not silent pawns

or victims mean that the *hujum* could not have been a colonial process, as women living under unambiguously colonial projects also had such agency.

Rather, to resolve the question of whether or not the Soviet Union was a colonial power, one must look to the economic relationship between the Soviet leadership and Central Asia. This paper has suggested some approaches to this problem, but they are still fragmentary and incomplete. Particularly importance would be a detailed analysis of how Uzbek people themselves (not just Uzbek crops or the Uzbek landscape) were incorporated into the new Soviet economy being constructed from 1929 on, how they understood themselves and this labor, and how this process contrasts with the much-better studied effects of Stalinist industrialization of peasants and workers in the rest of the Soviet Union. An analysis of the *hujum* should not be only a story of gender, discourse, and subjectivity, but rather a story of how these elements interacted with the overall economic and political processes that were reshaping Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s. Existing paradigms do not have the ability to adequately explain this interaction.

## STUDENT BIOGRAPHY

Elizabeth Dean was born in Dallas, Texas on November 23, 1994 and grew up in Coppell, Texas. She graduated from Coppell High School in 2013 and enrolled in the University of Texas at Austin, where she will graduate with degrees from Plan II Honors, Linguistics, and Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. In college she spent endless hours at the library, studied abroad in Moscow, and participated in activism. She will begin a PhD program in Russian history at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign this fall.

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